

# Daily Press Briefing: Discussion on Cuba

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**April 23, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** MSNBC spoke with his lawyer today, and I'm quoting here, after – the lawyer has just met with him in Havana and, “He told me yesterday emphatically that May 2nd, which marks his 65th birthday will be his last birthday that he marks in Cuba one way or the other.” Alan means that he does not intend to endure another year of the solitary confinement and that he will return to the United States before his 66th birthday dead or alive. What's your reaction?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, let me first say that we are – this is a case and a – the – his detainment is one that we are – have been consistently extremely concerned about. It's one the Secretary and other officials raise with our interlocutors who have relationships and have discussions with Cuba.

We recognize that Mr. Gross is in an extremely difficult situation. He's been imprisoned by Cuban authorities for more than four years for doing nothing more than helping Cuban citizens gain access to the internet. We have made abundantly clear to Cuban officials our position that Mr. Gross ought to be released immediately. President Obama has engaged foreign leaders and other international figures to use their influence with Cuba to promote his release, and we've kept the case at the forefront of our discussions. We reiterate, of course, our call for the Cuban Government to release Alan Gross immediately. His detention remains an impediment to more constructive relations between the United States and Cuba.

And obviously, comments like that certainly are, of course, of great concern to us. His health and safety and well-being are on our minds every day, and that's why we're working so hard to secure his return.

**QUESTION:** Just to put a fine point on this, you're saying there aren't any direct discussions between Cuba and the United States about his case? I think you said you were talking through interlocutors.

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm just making the point that we raise this at every opportunity we have.

**QUESTION:** So on Cuba, but not this specifically, how is the USAID review going into the Twitter – the text messages?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't have any update on it for you, Matt. It is a process that they have been undergoing to look at the entire program and make sure they're able to answer all the questions that have been posed.

**QUESTION:** As far as you know, though, the review is not over?

**MS. PSAKI:** Correct, mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** And you would know; they would tell you when it was over, right?

**MS. PSAKI:** I certainly hope so, yes.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**April 17, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** A couple on Cuba, both of them follow-ups.

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** One, how is the review of the Cuban Twitter, the content of these text messages going?

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm. I would encourage you to check in with my colleagues at USAID who are undertaking that right now. I don't have any updates from here. I know they're looking into it.

**QUESTION:** Do you know if they're anywhere close to completion?

**MS. HARF:** I do not know that, Matt.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But just to put a fine point on this, USAID does come under the auspices of the State Department, does it not?

**MS. HARF:** A fact I've reminded them of several times recently.

**QUESTION:** Okay. All right. So they will let you know that – when it's done and you might have something to say? Because they don't have a daily press briefing, as you (inaudible).

**MS. HARF:** I've offered them this podium if they'd like to talk more in depth about this issue.

**QUESTION:** I'm sure they're thrilled at the offer. And then I have a follow-up to a question that's gone back now a couple months.

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** This is on the banks, the bank accounts --

**MS. HARF:** For the Interests Section.

**QUESTION:** -- for the Interests Section and for the Cuban mission to the UN. Has this been resolved, and what is this – and if not, what exactly is the government – if anything, what exactly are – is the Administration doing to help the Cubans find a bank that will (inaudible)?

**MS. HARF:** To my knowledge, it hasn't been resolved yet. As they announced in a press release on February 14th, because of banking difficulties, they'd suspended certain consular services. We have been working with them to try – we have been to try to identify a new bank.

We are continuing to help them find a long-term banking solution. We are encouraging them to consider all available options, including potential solutions we've discussed with them, which I can't outline from here obviously. But we're working with them and we hope we can find a solution.

**QUESTION:** I'm not sure I understand why.

**MS. HARF:** Why? What don't you understand?

**QUESTION:** What's a potential solution that you've --

**MS. HARF:** We're trying to be creative here because we want to be able to solve this, so we're discussing several potential solutions with them. Can't outline them from here.

**QUESTION:** Why -- well, why not?

**MS. HARF:** Because it's private diplomatic discussions that haven't come to a conclusion yet. Obviously, we don't want to get ahead of the process. It's a decision the Cubans can make. We're trying to help them with that.

**QUESTION:** Is it your sense or your -- it's your understanding, then, that they have been presented with an option that would work, but they just have not yet decided whether --

**MS. HARF:** I don't know about more of the details. I think we're trying to work through some potential solutions right now. Again, we're trying to help in any way we can.

**QUESTION:** Is there a reason that it's taking so long? I mean, you talked about the date, February 14th. That's two months ago.

**MS. HARF:** That's when they --

**QUESTION:** -- that's two months ago.

**MS. HARF:** Yeah. I don't know, honestly, Matt. I know that we're trying to help them find a solution.

**QUESTION:** All right. Could -- if there's any way that someone could check to find out exactly what it is that's being done to help them and why --

**MS. HARF:** Well, we're --

**QUESTION:** -- frankly, it's taking so long because it's been two months and the accounts have been closed, so --

**MS. HARF:** Right. I mean, this isn't a unique situation necessarily to Cuba. Diplomatic missions often encounter banking challenges here. We try to help them find banks and we're trying to work with the Cubans here as well.

**April 11, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Yeah. The French foreign minister will be in Cuba tomorrow.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** This is the first time for more than 30 years. Is it a good thing according to the United States?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think I spoke to this a couple of weeks ago on the trip --

**QUESTION:** But it was not confirmed. It is --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, when the trip was announced. Obviously, every government makes their decisions about who they have relations with and where they visit, and we certainly respect that. We do ask countries around the world, including France, to raise issues that we share concerns about, whether it's freedom of media and speech or human rights issues. And we'll see if this is one of the issues that the Secretary discusses when he next sees the foreign minister.

**QUESTION:** Do you know if he's going to raise the issue of Alan Gross at all? Is that something that you've asked him to do?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not aware of a recent discussion about this particular issue, but broadly speaking we certainly do ask foreign counterparts, including the French, including a range of our allies, to raise that issue and the importance of returning Alan Gross to his family.

**QUESTION:** On Cuba more broadly, do you have -- has there -- is there an answer yet from either you or AID as to these apparently political texts/tweets?

**MS. PSAKI:** There's nothing new. And what I was trying to convey yesterday was that Administrator Shah, what he was -- what he -- in answer to a question yesterday, he conveyed a desire to look broadly at the program, including the text messages, and so I suspect they'll take the time to do that before further evaluation publicly.

**QUESTION:** Do you know that -- then should we expect an answer from AID or from here, once there is one?

**MS. PSAKI:** I suspect AID, and we can certainly discuss it as well, but they're taking a broader look beyond the text messages.

**April 10, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Have you – I know that Administrator Shah was on the Hill this morning and that he was asked some questions about this, and I know that Senate – the Foreign Relations Committee has asked for some kind of a – I guess not an investigation, but some kind of a look into all of AID's internet – not just this one, but anything they might be doing. But I'm wondering if you were able to get an answer to the question about those texts that I was referring to yesterday --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- that did appear to have political content.

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, USAID is continuing to gather background information. I would point you to specifically what Administrator Shah said this morning I believe in response to a question. He's asked his team to review all of the information related to the program, and certainly these reported texts will be a part of that process.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Bu you do not – yeah, that review is not finished; it just started, correct?

**MS. PSAKI:** Correct. Correct.



**April 9, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** I need to get – Cuba --

**MS. PSAKI:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** -- and this whole Cuba Twitter thing, which was been discussed on the Hill over the course of the past couple days. Last week, I believe it was on Friday, Marie said that the messages that were sent on this -- that none of the messages that were sent via this -- I don't know what even you call it -- scheme --

**MS. PSAKI:** ZunZuneo?

**QUESTION:** Yes. No, I know that's the name of it. I'm trying to figure out -- this initiative -- none of the messages that were sent by -- text messages that were sent on these cell phones were political in nature, at least overtly political in nature. Over the course of the past couple days, there have been -- some of my colleagues have found messages that were in fact political in nature, or at least involved political satire, and have discovered that a political satirist, a Cuban expat, was in fact hired maybe by the contractors, but as paid for by this. Are you able to say again that there was no political content involved here? Or are you now, on further review, toning that denial down?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, Matt, as Marie noted last week, the intention of the ZunZuneo program was to create a platform for Cubans to speak freely among themselves. If the intent went beyond this, that would certainly be troubling to us, and USAID is looking into that as we speak. But it is worth noting that we're talking about reported text messages from five years ago. We -- for -- about a program that ended in 2012, and there are some -- there's some uncertainty about whether the timing of these text messages -- whether they were drafts or actually released, whether they were linked to the program or not. So those are all questions that USAID is looking into as we speak.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And we will get -- presumably when they discover -- when they find out those answers, the answers will be made public, they're not going to be kept secret?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure, certainly.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And I think that the understanding that the idea was to get Cubans to talk amongst themselves here. The question is whether these messages that were political had something to do with politics or were political satire. Not -- the question is not whether -- if they originated from within -- amongst Cubans using the system, but if they originated with the people who were --

**MS. PSAKI:** I understand --

**QUESTION:** -- contracted by USAID.

**MS. PSAKI:** I understand your question. I understand your --

**QUESTION:** I mean, one Cuban saying to another that Fidel looks like he died 10 years ago is a lot different than if the U.S. Government was paying someone who then inserted this into the system.

**MS. PSAKI:** I understand your question. What is unclear is whether they were drafts, what the timing was, whether they were linked to the program or not, and so that's what they're looking into now.

**QUESTION:** Well, I -- but the bottom line is that last week, when Marie said definitively that there were no political messages, no overtly political messages sent out on this thing, you're not sure that that's correct now?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, that was --

**QUESTION:** You're saying that if there were --

**MS. PSAKI:** That would be troubling.

**QUESTION:** -- that would be troubling.

**MS. PSAKI:** That was the information that was available at the time, and again --

**QUESTION:** I'm not saying --

**MS. PSAKI:** No, no, I'm just conveying that was the information that was available. This is a program that, again -- and we're talking about text messages that were from five years ago -- it's challenging to get to the bottom of the details.

**QUESTION:** Right. No, I understand that. So if they were in fact -- and I realize this is a hypothetical, but if in fact it is discovered that there were political messages, that would be troubling you because that would be -- would have been inappropriate? Why would it be troubling?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, there were specific purposes of this specific program, and that was to provide a platform for Cubans to speak freely among themselves. Obviously, we've conveyed what the program was and wasn't, but we're looking into the facts and we'll make them available as we know them.

**QUESTION:** Well, I guess I'm just -- what I'm wondering is why it would be troubling if in fact there were -- there had been -- what is the reason that it would be troubling? Because that was not the point of the program, or because -- because why?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, that wasn't the purpose of this particular program, and it was to provide a platform for the Cubans themselves. And obviously, we're looking into the details and we'll make those available.

**QUESTION:** Well, so if contractors for USAID inserted messages or sent messages on this system that were political and would be troubling to you, they were acting on their own, they were rogue elements here?

**MS. PSAKI:** I think we have to look into what the specific details were. These were obviously – the reported text messages were from contractors, I believe. We don't have the details at this point on the timing, so let us venture to get more and we'll be able to better answer those questions.

**QUESTION:** Jen, can you please restate why it was appropriate for an agency that is known for food, water, emergency health care, emergency shelter should be in the business of providing communication platforms? Isn't that something that's more appropriate for the private sector?

**MS. PSAKI:** There are a range of programs around the world that enable people to freely communicate when that's not an option, and that's a tool the United States certainly supports. So I don't think it's out of the norm at all.

**QUESTION:** So just to clarify, I mean, it's – so there is some kind of reviewing going on now to evaluate what was done?

**MS. PSAKI:** I wouldn't overstate it. Again, I think there are – these are reported text messages, a handful of them from five years ago, and there's a question of timing and whether they were linked to the program or not, and we're just venturing to get --

**QUESTION:** Because a few days --

**MS. PSAKI:** -- to the bottom of the facts.

**QUESTION:** The reason I'm asking: Few days ago, after this question was raised, some officials at AID program was saying that – I'm – I don't know, if I'm wrong, correct me – it said that we are proud of what we did.

**MS. PSAKI:** That hasn't changed. But obviously, we're talking about a handful of reported text messages, and we just want to get to the bottom of the facts, and we'll make those available as we know it.

**QUESTION:** I'm not going to belabor the (inaudible) --

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Why is the timing – I don't understand why --

**MS. PSAKI:** As to whether it was linked to this program or not or whether it was related to something else.

**QUESTION:** Well, how would they be – I don't know how it could've been related to something else if the --

**MS. PSAKI:** There's a question of the timing, if the program had even started or not. So we're looking into all of that.

**QUESTION:** So – well, how could they be sent – I don't get it. If you're talking about – you say – as you said, they're talking about text messages from five years ago.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** You're saying that the program didn't exist five years ago?

**MS. PSAKI:** Again, I don't want to speculate too much because we're looking to get to the bottom of the facts here, Matt, but --

**QUESTION:** Or that the program had ended before --

**MS. PSAKI:** The program ended in 2012.

**QUESTION:** Right, which is not five years ago, right?

**MS. PSAKI:** Correct. But these text messages, I believe, are from about five years ago, these reported text messages.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** But you're not – you're saying you're not certain that they were sent or they were drafted for this program?

**MS. PSAKI:** Correct.

**QUESTION:** Is that what you're saying?

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**April 7, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** On Cuba, the USAID program to create a Twitter feed for Cubans, it was said last week that the program was not covert or classified.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Do you know if any parts of it were classified that would require members of Congress to be briefed in a SCIF about it?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not aware of it being classified in any capacity, but I'm happy to check with our team and see. Obviously, there were briefings, as Marie mentioned, with Congress that were offered.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And on those briefings – I would appreciate if you could take it.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** But on those briefings, I think the White House said that this was – the program was fully debated by Congress. It was said last week that briefings were offered to members of Congress --

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- two different things. I think it was said last week at this podium that if members of Congress didn't take advantage of the briefing, then hey, that's not anything you all can do about it.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** But the White House indicated that everybody was briefed on it. So do you know which it is?

**MS. PSAKI:** I'm not sure there's a difference. I mean, it's rare that any briefing everybody participates in, right? So I'm not sure. I would ask, of course, my former colleagues if they meant every person attended and they checked the box on attendance. I think they meant the same thing we did over here, which was that briefings were offered to a broad array of members, and obviously, all of them rarely participate in every briefing offered.

**QUESTION:** Or debated? I mean, I think the words Carney used were "fully debated in Congress." I mean, what does that mean to you?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, again, I know this was discussed. I don't have any other detail, really, for you. I would also point you to USAID posted a blog post that just went up, I think, right before we came out here, so – that goes through point by point. That may be useful to some of you who are following this story.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure.

**April 3, 2014**

**Marie Harf**, Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Thanks. We'd like to ask some questions about --

**MS. HARF:** Let me guess.

**QUESTION:** -- about a certain USAID program run in Cuba.

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** And my colleague, Jack Gillum, is going to start off the questioning.

...

**QUESTION:** So was Secretary Clinton aware of this program and did she authorize it?

**MS. HARF:** Well, first, why don't I make some comments about the overall story and then I'll get into your specific question.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** The first is that I do think that there -- in this, I think, rather -- no offense -- breathlessly written story, there were a number of misconceptions in this story about what this program was and what it was not. I'm happy to go through those in detail today.

The first being, of course, the most important: that there was nothing classified or covert about this program. Discreet does not equal covert. Having worked for almost six years at the CIA and now here, I know the difference. So I'm happy to go into that in a little more detail as well.

In terms of why we undertake these programs, because we have been very clear, as has Congress, that it is important to support the Cuban people, to provide them with platforms for expression. That's what we were doing. This was a platform. We were not generating political content of any kind on this platform. We were letting the Cuban people do that themselves. In these kind of hostile environments, for the safety of the people working on these programs, indeed for them to be effective, we believe we must be discreet in doing so.

In terms of your specific question, it is my understanding that this did not reach the Secretary's office, either the previous Secretary of State. Obviously this ended before Secretary Kerry came in. He also was unaware of this program. It went through the normal USAID chain in terms of approval as well.

So I'm happy to dig into some of the details here if you'd like to ask them.

**QUESTION:** Sure. Well, I just want to say if you could first start out by characterizing what you say are some of the inaccuracies in the report.

**MS. HART:** Mm-hmm. Well, the notion that this is covert or secret. I think you've seen a lot of reports picking up on your story today that say secret, covert action that we were running in Cuba. That is by far not the case.

Covert action, which you can find defined in Title 50 of the U.S. Code, includes among other things the fact that you can legally and you do legally deny it. That was not the case here. The documents associated with the contracting companies were not classified. If you asked directly the contractors or the people who were aware that we were funding it if they were working for the United States Government, they would have said yes. They would not deny it. Covert action by definition includes the ability and the need to legally deny it.

So I think the tone of this story that this was somehow secret, that this was somehow covert, is just not correct.

**QUESTION:** There's a difference between secret and covert, correct?

**MS. HART:** Well, secret is – it wasn't classified. It – yes, there is, but it wasn't either. And I think the article makes a nod to it being one of the two.

In terms of the funding here – you asked me about inaccuracies, let me keep going here. In terms of the funding here, I think that your report – and let me just get this funding part here – talked about money coming possibly from funding that had been earmarked for Pakistan. It's my understanding – and we can double-check with AID – that this was all ESF funding that was directed to Cuba. It was notified to Congress in a 2008 congressional notification titled "Outreach to New Sectors of Cuba Society" for the amount of \$6,850,000 for a number of programs, including this one.

We also offered to brief our appropriators and our authorizers, which is HACFO, SACFO, SFRC, and HFAC, about our Cuban outreach programs. And again, you hear on the Hill from many people that they support these kinds of democracy promotion programs.

Another item was the notion that we were somehow trying to foment unrest, that we were trying to advance a specific political agenda or point of view. That – nothing could be further from the truth. We believe that the Cuban people need platforms like this to use themselves to decide what their future will look like, and that's certainly what we did here.

We were trying to expand the space for Cubans to express themselves to – they could have expressed – excuse me – anti-American views on it. We didn't monitor or we weren't able to choose what they say on these platforms. That's up to them. So this was, like other programs – sorry, I'm choking here – a program that, because of the hostile operating environment in Cuba, it was done discreetly. And --

**QUESTION:** I just had a quick question for you.



**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** So you say that this is not covert.

**MS. HARF:** Correct.

**QUESTION:** But I'm just -- help me draw the line here, because this is a program that was set up that was so secret that it --

**MS. HARF:** It wasn't secret. Secret is a technical term, and it was not classified.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well, it was obfuscated in the sense that it was set up with foreign bank accounts --

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- it was set up with foreign companies overseas. The CEOs who were interviewed this were not told it was a U.S.-backed project. So help me understand how that is not covert.

**MS. HARF:** Well, a bank overseas doesn't equal covert action. It just doesn't. It's a fact. What I would say is that you have to -- when we talk about discretion, it's not just discretion with the people on the ground. It's discretion about where the funding is coming from, so the Cuban Government won't shut it down, they won't clamp down on average Cubans trying to talk to one another on this. Again, having a bank account overseas doesn't equal, anywhere I've read in any kind of covert action definition, covert action.

**QUESTION:** Right. Well --

**MS. HARF:** The documents weren't classified and the contracts weren't classified. When companies do covert action or classified undertakings with the United States Government, the contracts are classified. That was not the case here. By definition, this does not meet the covert action definition.

**QUESTION:** Well, when you mention the documents, they specifically talk about keeping this an under-the-radar strategy and keeping the --

**MS. HARF:** Discretion, absolutely.

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MS. HARF:** We know the operating environment in Cuba. We know it requires discretion.

**QUESTION:** So you talk about saying that the appropriate members of Congress were briefed on this.

**MS. HARF:** I said Congress because there was a congressional notification --

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MS. HARF:** -- and that key staffers on these committees were -- had -- we had consultations with them regularly on all of our programs, and obviously, we offer briefings to these four committees when they ask for them. And they're very supportive of our efforts in Cuba.

**QUESTION:** So the senator who oversees funding for the State Department says that he didn't know about the program, called it, quote, "dumb," and said he wouldn't have supported it. So how is there support on it?

**MS. HARF:** Oh, I'm not going to speak for the senator. But again, we submitted a congressional notification in 2008 outlining what we were doing in Cuba. I can't speak to why he knows certain things or doesn't know certain things.

**QUESTION:** But is he one of the senators who would have had to approve this report? I mean, you just mentioned, what, four committees?

**MS. HARF:** Approve what report?

**QUESTION:** Or, I'm sorry, approve this program, or at least be notified of this program.

**MS. HARF:** Well -- right. So we have authorizers and overseers here. We have, obviously, on the House and the Senate side, Foreign Ops, and on the House and the Senate side, Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs. So in terms of this specific funding, these are the folks that sign off on it. Funding got signed off on for it --

**QUESTION:** So it never went through the Appropriations Committee, it only went through --

**MS. HARF:** That's what I said, HACFO and SACFO, uh-huh. That's how we get appropriated. Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** That's interesting.

**QUESTION:** In the --

**MS. HARF:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** In the wake of the arrest of Alan Gross, were you concerned that the covered-up nature of the U.S. Government involvement could have endangered him or endangered other Cubans using the service?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think two points. The first is you use -- you keep using terms that have some nefarious tone to them -- covered up. This was discreet.

**QUESTION:** What term would you use?

**MS. HARF:** I would just say it was discreet, because – exactly because we know the --

**QUESTION:** Okay. So would the discreet nature of the U.S. Government do that?

**MS. HARF:** Well, we operate discreetly exactly because the Cuban Government has put dissidents in jail.

And look, on Alan Gross, we have been very clear. The Cuban Government needs to release him on humanitarian grounds as soon as possible. That has not changed. This does not change that in any way.

**QUESTION:** Why not? Doesn't it put him more at risk?

**MS. HARF:** No. We think they should release him on humanitarian grounds. Look, we've been very clear that we promote freedom of expression in Cuba. That's not a secret. If anyone thinks that's a secret, then they haven't been paying attention to what we've been talking about with Cuba over the past decades.

**QUESTION:** On USAID's website --

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** -- it says, "We partner to end extreme poverty and promote resilient democratic societies."

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Is this just another example of USAID doing its mission?

**MS. HARF:** Well, absolutely. Resilient democratic societies – part of that is freedom of expression and allowing the Cuban people to have platforms. Again, this was a platform where the Cuban people were allowed to create the content. When it started, the folks who operated it put weather content on it, sports content on it, to get it up and running. But no political content was ever supplied by anyone working on this project or running it. It was the people – the Cuban people on the ground who were doing so.

**QUESTION:** Marie, what did the program accomplish? Because it looks like it was ended in 2012.

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm. It ended when its normal contract ran out. It just wasn't renewed. It wasn't ended for any specific purpose. Look, we've seen – we have seen space increasing for Cubans on the internet. We've hoped that they will be able to do more of that, right? So I don't know if there's a specific – what this program itself did, but overall – excuse me – our programs are designed, again, to increase this space.

I would also note that the GAO did an extensive look into all of USAID's programs on Cuba; as part of their inquiry, had extended telephone conversations with the two contractors running this program, had access to all of the documents about this program, and determined that everything was going fine.

**QUESTION:** Why was the contract not renewed? You said it ran out --

**MS. HARF:** Yeah, just --

**QUESTION:** -- I mean, the money ran out. So why -- I mean, if the government had put so much interest, or USAID had put so much interest into this platform --

**MS. HARF:** Well, I wouldn't say so much interest. Obviously, overall we care about --

**QUESTION:** Six point eight -- how much was it?

**MS. HARF:** This was a three-year grant totaling 1.2 million. The -- what I read for you was for Cuban programs writ large --

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** -- that year in that congressional notification.

**QUESTION:** Okay. So to go off on Margaret's question, you said that it accomplished a lot. So --

**MS. HARF:** No, I didn't say it accomplished a lot. I said our overall policy towards increasing freedom of expression in Cuba, we think, has made some progress there, but there's obviously a lot more work to do.

**QUESTION:** As a result of this platform?

**MS. HARF:** As a result of our programs in general. I don't know specifically what the outcome was from this platform.

**QUESTION:** So you specifically say that this was not to foment unrest, yet specific objectives of this program was to -- one of them was to organize, quote, "smart mobs" for demonstrations to meet at a moment's notice. Can you explain that discrepancy?

**MS. HARF:** Uh-huh. Well, the documents referenced in terms of smart mobs were not USAID documents. They were meeting notes between the grantee and the contractor. There was a USAID staff member present during this brainstorming session, but the documents in your story are not USAID documents. The purpose of this project was to create a platform for Cubans to speak freely among themselves. Brainstorming -- the meeting notes come from brainstorming between grantees and contractors. In no way is U.S. policy -- those statements, obviously, were

inconsistent with the purpose of the program. Nothing like that was ever requested of USAID. So random meeting notes that were provided to you of one brainstorming session in no way indicate what the overall purpose was of this \$1.2 million project.

**QUESTION:** Can you explain the date of those meeting notes? The nature of that document that you're quoting from that I can't see?

**MS. HARF:** Like the documents you reported on that we didn't see?

**QUESTION:** Sure. Can you describe when that – when those (inaudible)?

**MS. HARF:** I can get the date of it, but it's the one that's referenced in your story.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Marie, is the State Department concerned that disclosure of this program puts USAID workers abroad at risk?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I think what you see today is me being very clear about the nature of this program and that USAID does not do covert action overseas, because they do a lot of very good work in a lot of very tough places, and we don't want misperceptions based on facts that aren't entirely true to cloud people's judgment about what USAID does overseas. So we don't want it to. We certainly hope that this article doesn't. That's why I'm being very clear and standing up here and saying this.

**QUESTION:** Is this one of the reasons, though, that Dr. Afridi remains in jail in Pakistan?

**MS. HARF:** Not at all. Not at all.

**QUESTION:** Yes, please. I mean, I'm trying to connect this event or this – what, call it discreet or secret operation, with similar things were done and then people will start to – some governments complain about it when – with the start of the Arab Spring. Is similar actions, or is this something different as a policy, doing these similar things which is, like, it was said that was giving – whether it's Egypt, whether in Syria, whether in Libya, whether other places, they were talking about giving a platform.

**MS. HARF:** Right. Well, to be clear, this program with this specific online platform was just in Cuba. I don't know, quite frankly, of all of the different platforms we have all over the world. We generally do promote freedom of expression and in hostile environments like this one take – go to great lengths to make sure they are done discreetly. In other places, the operating environment isn't as difficult --

**QUESTION:** Because --

**MS. HARF:** -- so we do very openly encourage freedom of expression very, very openly.

**QUESTION:** Because it was raised, this issue, in 2012 and 2013 especially --

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- last year and the year before that, regarding the issue of some equipments and how they are avoiding to be jammed or -- as a platform.

**MS. HARF:** Yep.

**QUESTION:** But then after that, realized that some people were trained under some aid programs in places like Belgrade and other -- Sarajevo and other places. Is this a policy, or it's just (inaudible) in the issue that he -- my fellow, raise it now, just Cuba? Or it's a policy it can be applied any place?

**MS. HARF:** Well, the policy of supporting freedom of expression, particularly in authoritarian -- under authoritarian regimes where there's not a lot of freedom of expression is of course our policy. How we do that is tailored to each country. So this program was specific to Cuba. Other places around the world, we do democracy promotion in different ways.

What I will say is one of the reasons I think it's dangerous to mischaracterize these programs as covert, as classified, as secret -- because this was not -- is because, as you point out, in many places around the world, there are many misperceptions out there and conspiracy theories about what the United States is or isn't doing. So we don't want that kind of misperception to play into what we know are just falsehoods being perpetrated in other parts of the world.

**QUESTION:** To avoid this perception, or whatever you can call it --

**MS. HARF:** What?

**QUESTION:** -- misperception, how you explain to me that it's like -- or to anybody that how it is -- there is a big difference that you are giving a tool or a platform --

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** -- and you are not shaping the message?

**MS. HARF:** Exactly, which is I think the key point here.

**QUESTION:** I mean, you are saying it, but how you can control the -- I mean --

**MS. HARF:** Well, what I'm telling you is we, through subcontracting partners, some companies, created a platform that's similar to Twitter, where Cubans could freely express themselves. We did not supply political content. We did not drive the political content. We just -- our sole purpose here was to open the space so they could supply their own political content or talk about anything else they wanted. And quite frankly, they could have said terrible things about the United States and we would have no way of controlling that. So this is solely for the purpose of

creating a platform for Cubans to express themselves, which has long been the policy of the United States, the United States Congress, and many other people in this country.

**QUESTION:** The other thing which is like when a project like ended, how you make an evaluation it is successful or a failure?

**MS. HART:** And that's a good question. I think it speaks to Margaret and Lara's question. I'm happy to check with our team at USAID and see if they've done any kind of analysis of how successful or what impact it had. I don't know sort of – for example, I don't know what the user numbers were. I don't know how many people it reached. I'm happy to check with them and see if I can get some more information.

Yeah, Ali.

**QUESTION:** Are you aware of any changes that the congressional staffers who were briefed on this or had an opportunity to learn about it, any changes or complaints about the program or qualms about it that they raised?

**MS. HART:** Yeah. Not to my knowledge, but I'm trying to get a little more from our USAID congressional folks, who obviously have the lead on this, because I do want to be able to provide as much detail to you as possible. Obviously, we provide general congressional notification on Cuban programs and talk all the time with members of Congress and their staff about our programs in Cuba, which, again, are widely, widely supported on the Hill. So I'm trying to get a little more on that. I haven't heard of any. But again, we saw some comments today, so I'm sure next week when Administrator Shah and others are up on the Hill they'll have a chance to address this directly with Congress.

**QUESTION:** Have you heard from the Cuban Government about this today?

**MS. HART:** Not to my knowledge, no. But I – I'm happy to check, but not to my knowledge. Uh-huh.

**QUESTION:** Senator Leahy said this is counterproductive and puts Cubans at risk. So if that's how he sees it, how do you respond to that?

**MS. HART:** Well, again, I don't want to speak for the senator.

**QUESTION:** No, I --

**MS. HART:** Of course, I have great respect for him. But we believe that democracy promotion programs that increase space for freedom of expression in Cuba are very good for the Cuban people, that they don't put Cuban people at risk because of the discreet nature in which they do them. That's exactly why we do them in a discreet nature, so they don't put users at risk and they're not shut down, which would be limiting space for freedom of expression. So again, I don't want to speak for him. I am sure we'll have conversations with him or his staff. I know he has some questions about it. We're happy to talk to him about those questions.

**QUESTION:** Do you believe the fact of its exposure may put Cuban people who express themselves on this platform at risk?

**MS. HART:** That's a good question. I can check with our folks and see if they're doing any kind of damage assessment about that right now. I don't know. Obviously, one of the reasons we kept our involvement discreet was so people who used it at the time, before it was shut down, that they wouldn't be at risk. So certainly, we hope they wouldn't be, but let me check with our folks.

**QUESTION:** But that then leads back to the question about Senator Leahy's comments, which is to say that, I mean, he said it was counterproductive. If you do something that is discreet but not classified, that is subsequently exposed, as it can be because you say the documents were public and so on, you then could be doing something that could harm those people who availed themselves of this opportunity to express political views in a context in which the expression of views critical of the government can and does routinely expose people to risk.

**MS. HART:** No, and it's a good question. I would, I think, make two points on that. The first is when you say it gets exposed, obviously, again, not to be too critical of this story, but the tone that it was classified, covert, secret --

**QUESTION:** I'm not addressing that at all.

**MS. HART:** No, no, but that actually -- I am addressing your question -- in that when these discreet programs become public, I think mischaracterizing them increases the chances that people will be put at risk. That's where I was going with that.

**QUESTION:** Right. But --

**MS. HART:** And secondly, I don't think it's any surprise to the Cuban Government, quite frankly, that we are trying to increase freedom of expression in Cuba. I don't think that's a surprise to them. I also think that we have repeatedly called on them not to crack down on these people. We have very clearly said that they should not -- not these folks but other people expressing themselves freely, so they have a choice to make here and we hope they will make the right decision. Obviously, the people that were using it did not know it was U.S. Government-backed, so I think that also should probably play into their calculations.

**QUESTION:** Will you take that question of whether you think the exposure of a previously discreet program puts people in--

**MS. HART:** At risk? Absolutely.

**QUESTION:** -- at risk and therefore whether you perhaps should rethink the use of such discreet programs because their public airing could, in fact, harm the people you say you are trying to help?

**MS. HART:** So would you argue maybe covert or we not do them, or we make them public?



**QUESTION:** I'm not arguing anything.

**MS. HARF:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** I'm asking you if you are looking at this again in the light of the fact that it is now public, whether this might, as Senator Leahy suggests, be counterproductive --

**MS. HARF:** Yep.

**QUESTION:** -- because its exposure could harm the people whose freedom of expression you say you are trying to defend?

**MS. HARF:** Exactly. And I think I would, just to follow up on the question I asked you, I think we would say certainly we hope this kind of exposure doesn't put people at risk. When you look at the ways you can promote freedom of expression in Cuba -- this is what I was getting at with my question back to you -- you can either do it openly, which we think is very counterproductive because it would not work -- the Cuban Government wouldn't allow the U.S. Government to come in and do this, probably. And so we do think that the best option is to do it discreetly, but it's a good question and I will take it.

...

**QUESTION:** Yeah. I'm just curious about the time -- I mean, you say that, I mean, the government is obviously supportive of programs like this. AID, I believe, said that they are proud of the Cuba work that they did.

**MS. HARF:** Absolutely.

**QUESTION:** Rewinding back to September 2012 when this ended, if this was so successful and good -- I know you said the money stopped, but can you sort of help illuminate why there wasn't (a) another funding source; and if there was, or there wasn't, why it stopped, why it didn't keep going?

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm. Well, it -- the program wasn't shut down. It just ended when the funding ended because we are constant -- and again, I will take the question about if we can get numbers of users and things like that. We are constantly reevaluating our Cuba programs writ large, determining where the best use of our money, our taxpayer -- all of your taxpayer money goes, and where we can be most effective. And so for one reason or another, this was not renewed. Not every program is meant to last forever. So again, I don't think there was anything wrong with it. I think we just decided not to renew the contract. I am happy to check with the folks who were around then to see if there's any more light they can shine on that for you.

**QUESTION:** Right. But you did spend a couple of million dollars on this program over the course of --

**MS. HARP:** 1.2.

**QUESTION:** 1.2.

**MS. HARP:** It's not that much, actually, in the grand scheme of what we spend here.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But if it's not much, I'm curious why it didn't – why it wasn't continued to be extended, particularly when these social media platforms take years to develop.

**MS. HARP:** Well, I think I just answered that we thought it had been useful but the money was going to be – our priorities were going to be used in different ways. I'm happy to see if there's a more specific reason. I just do not know. I wasn't here then. I will check. I've been trying to get lots of answers on this today, and that's one I don't have.

...

**QUESTION:** Do you have any – did you have any chance to know what happened to those people who were using those platform?

**MS. HARP:** It's a good question. Let me see if I can find out some more. I think that speaks a little bit to Arshad's question as well.

...

**QUESTION:** You said that it's just now been made public, but in fact it was never secret, it was never covert --

**MS. HARP:** Right.

**QUESTION:** -- so the information was out there if anybody went looking for it as we did. Right? I mean --

**MS. HARP:** Right. I mean, right. There's levels here, right? There's something that we announced with a press release and put on our website. There's something that is, by definition in the U.S. code, covert or classified. And then there are things in the middle that for a variety of reasons, mainly security, we keep discreet. This was in the middle. So we weren't send – we weren't putting a press release out, but we also weren't – these document – this contract wasn't classified. And if someone had pressed the folks working on it, they would have said they worked for the U.S. Government.

**QUESTION:** So if I were to file a FOIA request, could I have gotten documents about this?

**MS. HARP:** I – a FOIA request is a very specific legal process. I do not make any predictions about how any FOIA request would turn out.

**QUESTION:** And one last thing: You say that this wasn't classified, but you're – the nature in which you're describing it, is it – you say that it may have put people at risk. Why wasn't it classified, if that's the case?

**MS. HARF:** Because there are certain conditions you have to meet for something to be classified. Look, work we do with certain communities all over the world can put people at risk. There are dangerous places we work in because we think it's important. People volunteer to work with the United States in many dangerous places. That does put them at risk because they think it's important. That doesn't make something classified. There are very specific – and I don't know if you're familiar with these – but there are very specific requirements to meet any one of the classification justifications that you can use to classify something. That's not necessarily always one of them. So clearly this didn't meet that.

**QUESTION:** Aside from the GAO report – I swear this is my last one --

**MS. HARF:** It's okay.

**QUESTION:** -- have there been other audits of this platform, inspectors general or anything like that? Any --

**MS. HARF:** Not to my knowledge. No.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS. HARF:** Again, the GAO report spoke to people involved, took a look at all of our Cuba programs, found out everything was working as it should.

**QUESTION:** And this is my last question, I swear, too.

**MS. HARF:** It's okay.

**QUESTION:** If --

**MS. HARF:** You're turning into Matt territory today, so promise me it's your last question. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** That's right, so --

**MS. HARF:** Between the two of you you're asking as many. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Two of us is one Matt.

**QUESTION:** So that GAO report, which actually I'm familiar with and went back and read this morning before coming over here – on – when I think it's page 9 that says that AID – and the quote here – there was “support for development of an independent social networking platform as part of this review.” I'm just try – curious how a program that's discreetly funded, organized

and operated by the U.S. Government, without telling the operators involved, how that's independent.

**MS. HARF:** Because we weren't exercising any kind of content control over it. The content was all independent. I haven't seen that specific report you're referring to, so I don't want to speak for the GAO.

**QUESTION:** This is the only part where this –

**MS. HARF:** I would check in with --

**QUESTION:** -- there's anything like this is referenced --

**MS. HARF:** I would check in with the GAO. But obviously, you're right; we were the funding source. But the content – everything that ended up on it after, again, this initial phase where we were tweeting about things like the weather and sports, was content that was not U.S. Government content.

**QUESTION:** Did the U.S. Government ever have an aim of providing content to the service?

**MS. HARF:** Political content?

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS. HARF:** No. Not at all.

**QUESTION:** When you said we were tweeting about the weather and so on, was – were people paid directly or indirectly by the U.S. Government tweeting on – or on this service?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I don't know what the word is. So at the beginning of the service, we provided content – and I can find out exactly how we did that – to get it up and running, about things like sports and the weather. Nonpolitical. Nothing political at all. Just to get it up and running.

**QUESTION:** This remained in Havana, right?

**MS. HARF:** I don't know where we were doing it.

**QUESTION:** Some guy --

**MS. HARF:** Yeah, I don't know if it was the person – I'm assuming it was, but I can – I don't know the details on that.

**QUESTION:** Can we move on?

**QUESTION:** So this was – wait, just one – sorry. So you did --

**MS. HART:** Now you want to stay on the topic.

**QUESTION:** No, no. You did provide content, though, even if it was nonpolitical content.

**MS. HART:** That's what I said. We did never – and I said that earlier. I was very careful to say we did not in any way provide political content, and we only provided that weather, sports content at the very beginning, and then we stopped. Once it was off the ground, we stopped.

**March 20, 2014**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**

**Washington, DC**

**Question:** Fabius is going to Cuba soon he says. And this will be the first kind of level visit on the French side for something like three decades. I just wondered if you had spoken, this building or this Administration has spoken to the French, sort of to voice any concerns about such a high-level visit, given where you are with your relations with Cuba.

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. The Secretary did speak with Foreign Minister Fabius this morning, but I'd have to check and see if this topic came up. Obviously, there's a range of issues we work with the French on. I'm happy to do that.

Broadly speaking, we understand that the issue of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba would be part of the negotiation of a new EU-Cuba agreement. That is important, important to the United States. We have a very good dialogue with our EU partners on Cuba, including the French, and regularly share information on the human rights situation there and our concerns about that.

We also encourage all nations with diplomatic representation in Havana, including France, to openly engage with Cuba civil society through their embassies in Havana and during visits of officials to Cuba.

**QUESTION:** Will you be asking the foreign minister perhaps to press the case for the release of Alan Gross?

**MS. PSAKI:** That is an issue we bring up on every occasion where there's an opportunity. I will check and see if that's a message we will be asking them to transfer to --

**QUESTION:** It would be interesting to see if what -- if during that conversation they talked about -- they spoke -- what else did Secretary Kerry and Fabius talk about?

**MS. PSAKI:** Sure. Why don't we get you a readout of the call after the briefing.

**QUESTION:** Can I -- just on the Alan Gross thing, it has bubbled up to the surface once again, this allegation that the U.S. has somehow abandoned Mr. Gross and is letting him -- is doing nothing to and get him out of prison. Is that -- do you agree with that characterization?

**MS. PSAKI:** Absolutely not. We remain as committed as we have been to his release. It's an issue we raise regularly through many channels, and that will continue.

**July 31, 2013**

**Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, Selections on Cuba  
Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Yeah, on Cuba, there are new regulations for visas for Cubans?

**MS. HARF:** Yes, just give me one second. So effective tomorrow, I believe August 1<sup>st</sup>, the State Department is changing the maximum validity of visitor visas for family and other personal non-immigrant travel from six months, as it is currently – six months single entry to five years multiple entries for qualified Cuban nationals. Again, this goes into effect tomorrow.

**QUESTION:** And what's the reason for this change?

**MS. HARF:** Well, this is part of our broader policy to increase people-to-people ties between Americans and Cubans, to increase communications with the Cuban people, to promote openness. The Administration, the Secretary certainly believes that these measures, in addition to others, increases people-to-people flow that's really key to promoting civil society, to promoting democratization on the island.

**QUESTION:** Yes. Has this anything to do with the migration talks with Cuba or is it totally separate?

**MS. HARF:** The migration talks are very structured, specific set of talks about a specific set of issues. To my knowledge, they aren't related, but if I get further detail I'll let you know.

**QUESTION:** Has this change been done just unilaterally or has it been dealt together with Cubans – to the Cuban Government for those changes?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have more details on that issue. I'm happy to look into that question if there's more to provide, to get back to you guys.

**QUESTION:** Are you saying you don't know if this issue was raised during the migration talks?

**MS. HARF:** I do not know. The migration talks, as you know, are a – deal with specific issues, logistical issues. I don't know if this specific change was discussed during the migration talks, but I'm happy to try and find out.

**QUESTION:** Could you find out?

**MS. HARF:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Because even though this does not – is not really migration --

**July 18, 2013**

**Marie Harf, Deputy Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, Selections on Cuba  
Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** I'd like to just go back to the North Korean ship. Any update on whether the U.S. has actually sent a team down there? What – whether you support the UN sanctions – whether you would support UN sanctions or further tightening of sanctions against Cuba on this?

**MS. HARF:** Well, I don't have any update for you. As we said yesterday, we stand ready to assist. As you also know, the ship is still being offloaded. And this process, just to set expectations here, will probably be a lengthy one. So we can talk about every day where the process is, but I just want to set expectations that this will take some time.

In terms of the sanctions, there is a process in place. We are supportive of that process because the bottom line remains that any alleged violation of UN Security Council resolutions and sanctions on North Korea is incredibly concerning to us, as we've said many times. And so we're just going to let that process play out. I don't want to speculate on how that might end or what actions might come out of that.

**QUESTION:** You said yesterday that Panama had asked for U.S. assistance. What is that assistance?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have details for you on what that might look like.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topics?

**MS. HARF:** Anything else on the ship?

**QUESTION:** One more. Is the U.S. going to – that assistance that was just raised, is that going to be with the U.S. bilaterally or is that going to take place through the UN?

**MS. HARF:** I don't have any other details on what that assistance might look like.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry but had the U.S. been tracking this? The ship has had a history of smuggling narcotics.

**MS. HARF:** Right.

**QUESTION:** Had the U.S. been tracking this ship prior to it going through the Panama Canal?



**MS. HARF:** I don't have any details for you on that question.

**QUESTION:** Could you come back to me on any --

**MS. HARF:** If I have anything else I can share, I would be happy to do so.

**QUESTION:** And yesterday you mentioned that you would be discussing the issue with Cuba. Do you have any more details on that, like what channels that it's going to take place through?

**MS. HARF:** I don't. I would underscore that the issue of the ship isn't a U.S.-Cuba issue -- it's really an issue that we're focused on in terms of the UN and the sanctions that we have through the UN on North Korea. We said we would raise it with them at some point. I don't have any update for you on that.

**QUESTION:** But the UN -- but the U.S. can push through the UN what is going on, so therefore you have a view on how that process should be --

**MS. HARF:** Well, we certainly have a role to play in that process. We welcome Panama's commitment to cooperate fully with the panel of experts that assists the DPRK Sanctions Committee that monitors UN member-state implementation. So we fully support their commitment to working with that panel and we'll continue to do so going forward.

**QUESTION:** Can we change topics?

**MS. HARF:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry --

**MS. HARF:** Oh, one more on the ship?

**QUESTION:** The Secretary --

**QUESTION:** I have one more, sorry.

**MS. HARF:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Senator Rubio has sent a letter to Secretary Kerry requesting that not only this be brought to the UN Security Council for sanctions but also that the State Department retake a look at its people-to-people exchange program. Do you know if Secretary Kerry -- if you all have received the letter? I know he's not here. And do you have any response to it or when he will be issuing a response?

**MS. HARF:** I haven't seen the letter so I don't have any details on that for you. What we've said broadly speaking in terms of our relation -- or excuse me, our contacts with the Cubans is that we

will work with them, like we did yesterday at the migration talks, on issues that are in our national security interests. That hasn't changed. But again, I haven't seen the letter and wouldn't want to comment on it right now.

**QUESTION:** At what stage does the U.S. talk to the Cubans about this? I mean, yesterday was a one-off – a one-day talk discussion on migration. When do you actually plan to –

**MS. HART:** I don't have a timeline for you on that. Again, this isn't – we're not viewing this as a U.S.-Cuba issue; we're viewing this as a potential violation of UN Security Council resolutions on North Korea. That's really the lens through which we're viewing it. Of course, any allegation that there has been a violation is incredibly concerning to us.

**June 17, 2013**

**Jen Psaki**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:**... I just want to nail down the postal talks with Cuba.

**MS. PSAKI:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Do you expect anything out of this round or is this really not – is this just – in other words, if these two days of talks are a success, there won't be direct mail service immediately, I presume, but maybe I'm wrong, so could you --

**MS. PSAKI:** That's a good question on the timeline. Just to give you a little bit of history here, the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 states that, quote, "The United States Postal Service shall take such actions as are necessary to provide direct mail service to and from Cuba." So this is – as you mentioned, on June 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> – well, you didn't mention the dates, but so everybody knows, representatives from the Department of State and the United States Postal Service will meet with representatives from the Government of Cuba for a technical discussion on reestablishing direct transportation of mail. The reason we're doing this is because it's, of course, good for the Cuban people. This is something we feel is good for us. But it's not meant to be a signal of anything or indicate a change in policy.

**QUESTION:** Are those talks here or in --

**MS. PSAKI:** In terms of the exact location, I'm not sure if they're at the Department of State or if they're just somewhere else in the --

**QUESTION:** Are those talks exclusively on the mail service?

**MS. PSAKI:** That is with the United States Postal Service. That's their purview.

**QUESTION:** But I'm saying is it mainly about the – is there anything going to come up about Mr. Gross?

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to predict. There are issues that are, of course, raised on both sides. As you know, this is an issue that has been raised at the highest levels from the United States, but given these are talks with the Postal Service, I would expect that will be the focus.

**QUESTION:** You don't consider that the highest level?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well – Brad, having fun on your last day? (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** Just one more. I mean, is the U.S. Postal Service in any kind of position to make any kind of deals or agreements with Cuba? I mean, this is an organization that is essentially going broke, and I'm just curious. Is --

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I think that's combining two different things, in my opinion. This has been -- we have had -- I read off the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS. PSAKI:** So they're simply allowing mail to travel, which is -- I would assume provides them with more revenue, with more stamps used.

**QUESTION:** Considering that -- well, all right, exactly. So in other words, this could actually help the Postal Union's budget if they are able to --

**MS. PSAKI:** I don't want to go too far on it, but -- I don't want to go too far, Matt, but it's more people using their services.

**QUESTION:** Jen, a clarification on that too. What is the genesis of this? I mean, how did these talks actually come about? Who asked for them?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, this is something that the U.S. has felt would be a positive step for the Cuban people. We felt it was in our interests. In terms of who specifically asked for it, I don't have that level of detail, but it's just something that we felt it was -- it would be positive moving forward.

**QUESTION:** But basically, the U.S. asked for it?

**MS. PSAKI:** I would have to check on that for you, but it's something, again, that we are very supportive of and we are, of course, helping direct here.

**QUESTION:** Isn't it a continuation of the talks from 2009 that were on the same subject?

**MS. PSAKI:** Well, I don't know if I'd call it a continuation because it's been a number of years, but yes, it's on the same subject, and we're hopeful that we'll be able to move things forward.

**May 23, 2013**

**Patrick Ventrell, Acting Deputy Spokesperson**

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** What – another in the same region – a high-level Cuban Foreign Ministry official is in town and I understand she was supposed to have her meetings here at State today. I wondered if that has happened, and (b) if the issue of Alan Gross was brought up.

**MR. VENTRELL:** I'm not sure if it's happened. We always raise the issue of Alan Gross and we make our case very clearly and consistently to the Cubans on Alan Gross. But I'll have to check about details of that meeting.

**QUESTION:** Patrick, can you just answer about this? As far as India-U.S. counterterrorism is concerned, because Home Minister of India Mr. Sushil Kumar Shinde was here in Washington, he met a number of people, including Homeland Security Secretary and Attorney General. Did he meet anybody in the building here? Or where do we go from here since President talking also today about counterterrorism around the globe?

**MR. VENTRELL:** These meetings were primarily with the Department of Homeland Security, but we do have robust counterterrorism cooperation with the Government of India. But I refer you to the Department of Homeland Security.

**May 3, 2013**

**Patrick Ventrell**, Acting Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** -- two things – three things, I think, on Cuba.

**MR. VENTRELL:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** One directly has to – relates to travel restrictions. And that is, have you gotten this letter from three members of Congress – Representative Ros-Lehtinen, Representative Scalise, and Representative Diaz-Balart about Castro's – about Ms. Castro's visa?

**MR. VENTRELL:** I'll have to check on that, Matt. I wasn't aware of that this morning.

**QUESTION:** Okay, well, regardless, the letter sent to Secretary Kerry was just sent, I think, this morning. So I'm not surprised you don't have it. But perhaps you are able to answer some of the questions that they have --

**MR. VENTRELL:** I'll do my best.

**QUESTION:** One is, why – these are questions that they asked: Why is the State Department ignoring current U.S. law by continuing to provide visas to Cuban Communist Party operatives such as Mariela Castro?

**MR. VENTRELL:** I do have a little bit of information about this. And again, what I said about adjudicating visas based on U.S. laws is something that we absolutely do. While we can't discuss the individual – specific details of individual cases, under Presidential Proclamation 5377 and other applicable requirements, those are all duly considered and strictly followed in adjudicating visa applications submitted by Cuban nationals. Each visa request is reviewed on a case by case basis, including with our agency partners, and there's no blanket ban on issuing visas to Cuban Government officials.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Number two: Given the fact that the United States must preclude any travel outside of a 25 mile radius – New York – for Cuban operatives – and I understand she was given a visa to go to New York to attend some kind of UN meeting – why did Mariela Castro get permission to go outside that 25 mile radius and attend this conference in Philadelphia?

**MR. VENTRELL:** Again, I can't speak about specific cases. You're right, Matt, that for certain countries at the UN, there are specific restrictions about officials who have come from that

country who are going just for UN business in terms of traveling outside that radius, but those can be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**QUESTION:** So if the – and not – and again, not specifically about this case, which you say you can't talk about specifically, but if permission was granted, it would – to go outside that radius, it would have been because there was some kind of compelling reason for that person to do so? Is that correct?

**MR. VENTRELL:** Again, they have to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**QUESTION:** All right. And then the last one is – it's a question about reciprocity --

**MR. VENTRELL:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** -- and whether U.S. diplomats in Cuba are given the – are freed or the restrictions on their travel have been either removed or eased in any way.

**MR. VENTRELL:** I'm not aware that they've been eased. There certainly are restrictions on our people, and at times, from time to time in the past, we've had frustrations or problems with travel, even sometimes for routine consular matters. But I'd have to check in terms of the very recent past.

**QUESTION:** All right. But you don't know of any specific reciprocity for – in exchange for the Mariela Castro (inaudible)?

**MR. VENTRELL:** Not in this specific case, but reciprocity is something that is one of our principal concerns and something that does govern how we look at this.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And when you do answer – when you do get this letter, when the Secretary does get this letter, and presumably there will go – be a response --

**MR. VENTRELL:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** -- do you know if the Department is able to say more to members of Congress than you are allowed to say from the podium?

**MR. VENTRELL:** I think there are some waivers to visa confidentiality for members of Congress, and I think that they'll be able to answer in more detail in terms of how this specific presidential – again, let me read it to you again. It's --

**QUESTION:** Yeah, no, they cite it --

**MR. VENTRELL:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** -- 5377, Section 1, all right.

**MR. VENTRELL:** Yeah. So I imagine in the letter we'll be able to get into more detail.

**QUESTION:** And then unrelated, but also Cuba: Are you aware of the decision this morning by a district judge in Florida to allow Rene Gonzalez, one of the Cuban Five, to remain in Cuba to finish out -- just to remain in Cuba, or even while he's on probation, in exchange for renouncing his U.S. citizenship?

**MR. VENTRELL:** Thanks, Matt. We have just learned of the judge's decision and we're studying it to understand the consequences, and I don't have any further information. So I have to refer you to Justice since this just happened.

**QUESTION:** All right. Well, can I ask you to take the question of whether -- I mean, our story at least says the Justice Department initially opposed the request to serve probation in Cuba, but that dropped its opposition when Gonzalez offered to renounce his U.S. citizenship.

My question that I would ask you to take is whether the State Department had any input into Justice's dropping of its opposition.

**MR. VENTRELL:** I'd be happy to look into it.

**QUESTION:** Thanks.



**April 24, 2013**

**Patrick Ventrell, Acting Deputy Spokesperson**

**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** On Cuba, the Cuban Government's submission to the UN Human Rights Council said that it's unable to make improvements, perceived improvements in human rights, because of the U.S. embargo, that that's holding it back. Does the United States have a reaction to that, about whether the embargo has a bearing on Cuba's efforts in human rights?

**MR. VENTRELL:** This is something that consistently comes up in the UN both in the Human Rights Council context and in the General Assembly, and we very clearly make our position known every time that it comes up. And I'd be happy to give you the full remarks that we've made both at the HRC and in the General Assembly in the past, but the bottom line is we have no ill will toward the Cuban people and it's the Cuban Government that needs to reform its practices and protect the human rights of its people. And our embargo is not designed to preclude humanitarian assistance and other vital goods going to the Cuban people, which have continued to flow. And as we've seen in the Obama Administration, there have been some changes to our travel policy in terms of allowing educational and cultural groups and other types of visits.

**April 10, 2013**

**Patrick Ventrell, Acting Deputy Spokesperson**  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** I was wondering – we understand that these children have been returned home to their legal guardian, their grandmother. I was wondering if you could talk in general about the negotiations that went on with the Cubans. It seems as if the cooperation, as you’ve said in your statements, was very good.

**MR. VENTRELL:** Well, we do appreciate the Cuban authorities’ extensive cooperation to resolve this situation quickly. Elise, as we talked about yesterday, one of the Department’s highest priorities is the welfare of U.S. citizens, and particularly children, who are our most vulnerable citizens. So thanks to a joint effort by the Department of State, FBI, U.S. Coast Guard, the two U.S. citizen children are safely back at their home.

So last night, late last night, the U.S. Interests Section in Havana facilitated the handover of custody of the two children from Cuban authorities to U.S. law enforcement.

**QUESTION:** But specifically about the negotiations with the Cubans, I mean, why do you think that they were willing to extradite these children? I mean, they – the Cubans have even said there are, like, 70 other American fugitives in the country they’ve been not willing to extradite.

**MR. VENTRELL:** Well, I can’t speculate or speak for them or their motivations, but we have a U.S. Interests Section in Havana, and it’s precisely there to deal with cooperation on cases like this, to facilitate cooperation in emergencies, and we did have extensive cooperation with Cuban authorities.

**QUESTION:** But how high up did the negotiations go? I mean, Secretary Kerry wasn’t involved or anything like that, was he?

**MR. VENTRELL:** This was primarily managed out of our Interests Section in Havana and the leadership down there. Clearly, also, as I mentioned, this is an interagency effort, so we were in contact with FBI, the Coast Guard, and domestic law enforcement, because it was Florida local law enforcement that was involved on their end. So it was a joint effort, but managed as we do in these crises.

**QUESTION:** And the Cubans weren’t offered anything or any suspects in this country in exchange?

**MR. VENTRELL:** That's not what happened here. This was law enforcement cooperation, and we're pleased that it was so extensive, and we were able to resolve this quickly.

**QUESTION:** Just one more: Do you think this presents some kind of opening for the U.S. to engage Cuba?

**MR. VENTRELL:** I'm not sure I would read into it one way or another. I mean, this was cooperation on a specific law enforcement matter.

**QUESTION:** Can I just ask, the word that was used in the question – in several of the questions was “negotiations.” Is that an accurate characterization of what – of the interchange between U.S. and Cuban officials on this? Were there negotiations or was it --

**MR. VENTRELL:** I'm not sure that's a word I've used. I think it was law enforcement.

**QUESTION:** No. I know you didn't use it, but you also didn't correct it, so I just want to – I mean, was there a negotiation over the handover of either the parents or the children?

**MR. VENTRELL:** I'd probably reference it as – law enforcement cooperation would probably be the term I'd used.

**QUESTION:** You would not characterize it as a negotiation?

**MR. VENTRELL:** Law enforcement cooperation.

**QUESTION:** In other words, you would not characterize it as a negotiation?

**MR. VENTRELL:** That's not our characterization.

**April 9, 2013**

**Patrick Ventrell**, Acting Deputy Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, selections on Cuba**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** Can we start with Cuba?

**MR. VENTRELL:** Yeah. Thanks for the question, Matt. This is – I think you’re referring to a specific family.

**QUESTION:** Yes. The Hakkens.

**MR. VENTRELL:** So we are aware of this case and the U.S. Interests Section is in contact with local authorities. U.S. officials are providing all appropriate assistance to the family. Because of privacy reasons, we are unable to provide additional information about this specific family, but what I do want to say more broadly speaking is that one of the Department’s highest priorities is the welfare of U.S. citizens overseas, and this is particularly true for children who are our most vulnerable citizens. So we work closely with legal guardians and both foreign and U.S. authorities to resolve these cases on a consistent basis when they arise.

**QUESTION:** Have you ever worked with the Cubans on – quite apart from the Elian Gonzalez case, which was the other way around. Do you work with the Cubans on – is there a history of cooperation there? Is there an agreement on child abduction that you have with the Cubans?

**MR. VENTRELL:** I’m not aware of prior engagement other than to say that our U.S. Interests Section is engaging, and we work closely with both legal guardians and foreign governments. And in this case Cuba is the government, so we’re working with them.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, but is there a framework, kind of an agreed framework between the U.S. and Cuba? I mean, I know that there are treaties and other less formal arrangements with other countries on child abduction.

**MR. VENTRELL:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Is there such a thing with Cuba?

**MR. VENTRELL:** Our understanding is that there’s not a specific agreement, nor are the Cubans members of The Hague Convention. We have urged all countries to join The Hague Convention, which provides a framework to work through these cases. In countries where there is not a framework, where they’re not members of the convention or there’s not a specific bilateral framework, we work with the government on a case-by-case basis and try to work through the issues, and that would include the Cubans.

**QUESTION:** All right. And when you say that your – the interests section is engaging, who is it engaging with?

**MR. VENTRELL:** Again, in touch with family members and in touch with the local government. I don't know particularly which ministry in Cuba would have jurisdiction here. I'm not aware of their – how their family court system and –

**QUESTION:** But engaging with the family there or with people back in the States?

**MR. VENTRELL:** Right. I mean, the idea is that –

**QUESTION:** I mean, has someone from the interests section gone to the marina where this boat is?

**MR. VENTRELL:** My understanding is that the interests section is engaging with the host government authorities about the issue to clarify it. So we work through these issues on that basis.

**February 25, 2013**

Patrick Ventrell, Deputy Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, Selections about Cuba  
Washington, DC

**QUESTION:** Do you have a reaction to **Raul Castro** saying he will not seek reelection in five years' time?

**MR. VENTRELL:** So, Brad, we are indeed aware of the reports that President Castro, Raul Castro, announced his intention to step down in 2018 after another five-year term. We also saw the announcement that Mr. Miguel Diaz-Canel was named First Vice President.

We remain hopeful for the day that the Cuban people get democracy, when they can have the opportunity to freely pick their own leaders in an open democratic process and enjoy the freedoms of speech and association without fear of reprisal. We're clearly not there yet.

**QUESTION:** Hold on, hold on. I'm glad you're aware. I guess that confirms that not everybody in the U.S. Government slept through the entire weekend. But do you have an actual reaction? Do you have a position on whether this is a good step, whether this is helpful in that process toward a freer, fairer, **Cuba** as you stated?

**MR. VENTRELL:** I think --

**QUESTION:** Or just that you know that things happened in the world over the last 48 hours?

**MR. VENTRELL:** Well, no. I mean, I think, Brad, what we're saying is that we've noted that it's happened, but clearly, a change in leadership that, absent the fundamental democratic reforms necessary to give people their free will and their ability to pick their own leaders, won't be a fundamental change for Cuba.

**QUESTION:** So this is not enough; they still need to do more if they want to, one, improve the state of their country and, two, repair relations with the United States?

**MR. VENTRELL:** Absolutely.

**February 22, 2013**

**Victoria Nuland**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, Selections on Cuba**

**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** There have been some cryptic comments from Raul Castro about possibly retiring. And you had CODEL there – well, not you, but we had a CODEL there recently. Have you had any indications that Castro may step back from national politics?

**MS. NULAND:** Well, first of all, with regard to the CODEL led by Senator Leahy, my understanding is that they went from Cuba on to Haiti. They may be coming home today. But we haven't had a chance to talk to them about their visit. So whether they got any insight is not yet clear to us. But I don't have anything particular to share on those reports otherwise, Brad, either.

**February 21, 2013**

**Victoria Nuland**, Spokesperson  
**Daily Press Briefing, Selections on Cuba**  
**Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** My second question is on Cuba. There are reports today that Secretary Kerry is in discussions on possibly removing Cuba from the state sponsor terror list. Can you comment on that?

**MS. NULAND:** I saw that report. Let me say firmly here it is incorrect. This Department has no current plans to remove Cuba from the state sponsor of terrorism list.

**QUESTION:** And why not?

**MS. NULAND:** We review this every year, and at the current moment we – when the last review was done in 2012, we didn't see cause to remove them. We'll obviously look at it again this year, but as I said, we don't have any plans at the moment.

**QUESTION:** Sorry, really quick, can you just give a little bit more of an explanation of what exactly are the – what makes a country – I mean, what are the specifications for a country being on the state sponsor of terror?

**MS. NULAND:** Well, we've talked about this before here. There's a limit to what I can get into because it takes me into intelligence. But we do – we are required to look at these lists every year and to judge countries individually against the standards in the legislation. And we did that in 2012. We'll obviously have to do it again in 2013.

**QUESTION:** So it's the State Department's belief that North Korea does not meet that threshold but Cuba still does? Correct?

**MS. NULAND:** Again, you know where we are on this, that a number of years ago in the context of this same annual review, DPRK was removed from the list. Cuba has not been.

**QUESTION:** Is the state sponsor of terrorism, is that intent plus actions? Is it, if you haven't done anything but you still would like to do terrorist acts, you stay on the list?

**MS. NULAND:** Well, why don't I --

**QUESTION:** I mean, I actually know that's how it is with FTOs, so I --

**MS. NULAND:** Yeah. I frankly haven't looked at the legislation in a while. Let me get you a separate briefing if you'd like.



**February 19, 2013**

**Victoria Nuland**, Spokesperson

**Daily Press Briefing, Selections on Cuba  
Washington, DC**

**QUESTION:** There's a congressional delegation in Cuba today apparently attempting to secure the release of American Alan Gross. How closely is this Department working with this delegation? Is the Administration aware that they're there? This involves Senator Patrick Leahy and other lawmakers. Are you working with them? Do you support the meetings?

**MS. NULAND:** Well, Guy, just to confirm what you have, Senator Leahy, along with several other senators and representatives, is in Cuba today. The Department briefed Senator Leahy's staff and some of the members before the trip, and we expressed our desire to see Alan Gross released. Our understanding from the CODEL is that they have been told that they will have an opportunity to see Alan Gross. You know where we've been, where we expect the CODEL will be, which is to call for his immediate release. And we will look forward to the results of their diplomacy on his behalf and more broadly with regard to all of our concerns about Cuba human rights and other things.

**QUESTION:** A quick follow-up. I mean, just regardless of whether or not Mr. Gross is able to leave Cuba with this delegation or not, there's a group in New York called the Council of the Americas that has put out a paper or they're just about to put out a paper that is calling on President Obama to use presidential powers to loosen up the embargo rather than trying to push something through Congress that would change American laws so that embargo restrictions could be lifted. Have you seen this report? Are you aware of it and do you have a comment on it?

**MS. NULAND:** I think you noted that it's something in the works, right? So I think if we have a comment, we'll wait and see it released.

**January 14, 2013**

Victoria Nuland, Spokesperson  
Daily Press Briefing, Selections about Cuba  
Washington, DC

**QUESTION:** Firstly, you had some comments on Friday about Cuba. Do you have anything new to say considering that today the exit visa seems to have been effectively lifted?

**MS. NULAND:** Well, as you know, we did put out some comments after the briefing because we had a number of questions. The United States welcomes any reforms that allow Cubans to depart from and return to their country freely, which is obviously a right that's provided to everyone under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to be able to come and go from your own country or any other country.

We are also committed to safe, legal, and orderly migration from Cuba to the U.S. in accordance with our bilateral agreements of 1994 and 1995. We continue to support purposeful travel that enhances contact between the Cuban and the American people. I don't have anything new to say with regard to trends since we put out these statements on Friday. Obviously, if we start to see changes in patterns, we'll let you know.

**QUESTION:** Can I just – we've got some early reaction that seems to say that even opponents of the regime seem to be getting their – this seems to be respectful of them as well. Is that what you guys are seeing as well?

**MS. NULAND:** I don't have anything on metrics over the last two days. You're talking about how many more Cubans are able to travel now?

**QUESTION:** And just that they don't seem to be excluding regime opponents as has happened with previous exit requirements.

**MS. NULAND:** I frankly think it's too early to tell. This went into effect on the 14<sup>th</sup>. And then just to remind that even though the exit visa requirement has been lifted, there are still requirements to enable Cuban citizens to get passports. Most of them who had passports were required to renew them in the context of this. So I think it's – we just have to see how it proceeds. But I don't think two days is enough of a test, obviously.

**QUESTION:** Can I follow up? I mean, why can't you speak to trends? I mean, clearly over the last – during the course of this Administration, you've seen, even as slight as it may be, an upward kind of trajectory in terms of some of reforms that are taking place in the country. And don't you think you should be encouraging these reforms rather than kind of giving them not significant weight? I mean, clearly more needs to be done, but you do seem to be downplaying the trends.

**MS. NULAND:** I think I started this conversation by saying that we welcome any reform, including this one, that makes it easier for Cubans to travel. But having – this having come into

force on the 14<sup>th</sup>, I'm not in a position here [2] on the 17<sup>th</sup> to evaluate whether the Cubans – whether the Cuban Government is really honoring its commitment to allow more people to travel.

**QUESTION:** I'm not talking specifically only about this event. But if you take it in totality with some of the other economic reforms and other types of political reforms that are taking place on the island, I mean, wouldn't you say that there is an upward trajectory in terms of reforms?

**MS. NULAND:** I think we would say that it is still one of the most repressive places in terms of its human rights record, in terms of its restrictions on its citizens, in terms of speech, assembly, political rights, et cetera. But we welcome any liberalization and we hope that this will turn out to be one such.

Please.

**QUESTION:** Any reaction to the delay in releasing George Abdallah by France?

**MS. NULAND:** We spoke to this last week – I don't think I have anything further – that we had deep concerns about this. You mean – or you're talking about the release of – you mean, him actually coming out?

**QUESTION:** They are delaying the release.

**MS. NULAND:** I don't have any specifics to go through here. You can speak to the French Government. I think there were also some concerns on their side as well.

**QUESTION:** On Syria. Syria's prime minister is going to be in Tehran tomorrow for talks. Any reaction to that meeting? Is that any further concern?